

## Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, SW  
SUBJECT: SWEDISH ELECTIONS

1. IN THE SWEDISH ELECTIONS, SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 19-20, THE RULING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WHO HAVE BEEN IN POWER CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1932, WILL BE FACING THREE NON-SOCIALIST OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE CENTER, MODERATE AND LIBERAL PARTIES. AT ISSUE IS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE SWEDISH VOTER WISHES TO HALT, OR AT LEAST SLOW DOWN, THE TREND TOWARDS GREATER SOCIALIZATION WHICH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE FURTHERED IN THEIR 44 YEARS IN POWER. NOT AT ISSUE IS THE WELFARE STATE; THE THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES FULLY SUPPORT THE VAST BODY OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION ENACTED BY THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS DURING THEIR LONG TENURE IN POWER. WHAT THE OPPOSITION IS CALLING FOR IS A REDUCTION OF THE EXTREMELY HIGH TAX RATE, THE IMPROVEMENT AND STREAMLINING OF THE VAST BUREAUCRACY, AND A STEP BACK FROM THE IMPERSONALIZATION IMPLICIT IN BIG GOVERNMENT.

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2. ALTHOUGH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE CAMPAIGNING

UNDER THE SLOGAN "DON'T VOTE AWAY SECURITY," THE THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE MAKING SOCIALISM ITSELF THE ISSUE. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, THE RELEASE LATE LAST YEAR OF THE CONTROVERSIAL MEIDNER REPORT, CALLING FOR COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP BY THE WORKERS OF ALL INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING MORE THAN 50 WORKERS, HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES DIVIDING THE TWO CAMPS. ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER PALME HAS TRIED TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM THE REPORT, CLAIMING THAT IT IS AN IDEA WHICH WOULD ONLY COME INTO EFFECT--IN MODIFIED FORM--IN THE 1980'S, THE ENDORSEMENT BY THE PARTY'S LABOR FEDERATION ALLY, THE GIANT LO, HAS PLACED THE PRIME MINISTER IN AN AWKWARD POSITION, AND PROVIDED THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WITH AN EFFECTIVE ISSUE TO USE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.

3. FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT AN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN; ALL OF THE SWEDISH PARTIES SUPPORT SWEDEN'S TRADITIONAL POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT IN PEACETIME AND NEUTRALITY IN TIME OF WAR. (FOR FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF AN OPPOSITION VICTORY, SEE STOCKHOLM 3877). IN RECENT WEEKS PALME HAS BEEN DENOUNCING THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT FOR ITS APARTHEID POLICY, BUT THIS ISSUE HAS LIMITED POSSIBILITIES SINCE ALL OF THE MAJOR PARTIES ARE CRITICAL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME.

4. THE MOST RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL (PUBLISHED IN EARLY JULY), INDICATED THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WERE LEADING THE INCUMBENTS BY A CONSIDERABLE MARGIN, WITH A POLL STANDING OF 53.5 PERCENT COMPARED TO A TOTAL SOCIALIST VOTE (SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS) OF 44.5 PERCENT. HOWEVER, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN CAPABLE OF MOBILIZING THEIR IMPRESSIVE PARTY AND LABOR ORGANIZATION MACHINERY IN THE FINAL WEEKS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS TO OVERCOME THE EARLY ADVANTAGES BUILT UP BY THE OPPOSITION. BUT IN THE PAST ELECTIONS, THE MARGIN IN FAVOR OF THE OPPOSITION HAS NOT BEEN SO LARGE THIS LATE IN THE CAMPAIGN, AND THE KEY QUESTION IS WHETHER THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WITH ONLY A MONTH TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, CAN TURN THE TIDE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN THEIR FAVOR. THE NEXT POLLS WILL NOT BE RELEASED UNTIL THE FIRST WEEK IN SEPTEMBER. IN THE VIEW OF A NUMBER OF VETERAN POLITICAL OBSERVERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO NARROW THE LARGE LEAD THAT THE THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES CURRENTLY HOLD.

5. MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING PARTISANS OF

BUT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE OPPOSITION  
PARTIES, BELIEVE THE PELECTION WILL BE EXTREMELY CLOSE  
AND THAT THE WINNING SIDE WILL HAVE A VERY NARROW  
MAJORITY IN THE RIKSDAG (PARLIAMENT). A REPETITION  
OF THE 1973 DILEMMA, WHEN THE TWO SIDES TIED AT 175  
EACH, IS IMPOSSIBLE, SINCE THE CONSTITUTION HAS  
BEEN AMENDED TO PROVIDE FOR A TOTAL OF 349 MEMBERS IN THE  
RIKSDAG. BUT, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT WHETHER THE SOCIAL  
DEMOCRATS OR THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WIN THE ELECTIONS,  
THEY WILL GOVERN BY A VERY SLIM MARGIN.  
SMITH

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